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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 4095th meeting of the Security Council, held on 31 January 2000, in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in the Middle East", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council has noted with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) of 17 January 2000 (S/2000/28) submitted in conformity with resolution 1254 (1999) of 30 July 1999.

"The Security Council reaffirms its commitment to the full sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries. In this context, the Council asserts that all States shall refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

"As the Security Council extends the mandate of UNIFIL for a further interim period of the basis of resolution 425 (1978), the Council again stresses the urgent need for the implementation of that resolution in all its respects. It reiterates its full support for the Taif Agreement and for the continued efforts of the Lebanese Government to consolidate peace, national unity and security in the country, while successfully carrying out the reconstruction process. The Council commends the Lebanese Government for its successful effort to extend its authority in the south of the country in full coordination with UNIFIL.

"The Security Council expresses its concern over the continuing violence in Southern Lebanon, regrets the loss of civilian life, and urges all parties to exercise restraint.

"The Security Council takes this opportunity to express its appreciation for the continuing efforts of the Secretary-General and his staff in this regard. The Council notes with deep concern the high level of casualties which UNIFIL has suffered and pays a special tribute to all those who gave their life while serving in UNIFIL. It commends UNIFIL's

troops and troop-contributing countries for their sacrifices and commitment to the cause of international peace and security under difficult circumstances."